



PRESS RELEASE

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Poway Unified Announces the Selection of Three District Teachers of the Year

***Carole DeBruin, Joe Gizzo, and Megan Gross Receive School District
Honors for the 2016-2017 School Year***

The Poway Unified School District is proud to announce Carole DeBruin, Joe Gizzo, and Megan Gross as the three District Teachers of the Year for the 2016-17 school year. These teachers received surprise visits at their sites this morning.

A committee of district and site representatives selected the three District Teachers of the Year based on criteria which included: innovations inside the classroom, contributions to their schools and the District, and commitment to their students.

The San Diego County Office of Education also sponsors a Teacher of the Year Recognition Program, honoring up to six teachers from *all* of San Diego County. All three PUSD Teachers of the Year will be submitted for consideration for County Teacher of the Year.



Carole DeBruin, a 40-year teaching veteran (19 years in PUSD), is a math teacher at Abraxas High School, where she helps her students rediscover the joys of learning and build their sense of self-worth. She has turned once struggling students into peer tutors. Carol's students tackle real-world problems and projects that emphasize community involvement. She has empowered students not only through math, but through an onsite Abraxas leadership club.

Through the creation of the club, she's been able to bring together two traditionally separate parts of the Abraxas campus: special needs adults in the Transition program and the diploma bound students. From "Toys for Tots" to "Jeans 4 Vets," these students work together to enact positive change in their community. Their recent Transition Prom was a huge success.

Carole also strives to find creative solutions to her students' needs on campus. She was instrumental in helping to create the Abraxas High community garden, and she is currently working on securing a grant to build "tiny homes" on campus for use by homeless students.



Joe Gizzo has been teaching for 16 years in PUSD. Joe is a teacher at Meadowbrook Middle School, working as the ASB/Leadership advisor, yearbook advisor, and Digital Photography teacher. He created the school's award-winning Digital Photography program from the ground up – working with the Museum of Photographic Arts to teach students artistic creativity through a digital lens. Joe's classes are built using the My Connect learning management system to create a "flipped classroom" where his students can learn independently and apply their knowledge in practical ways. Over the last six years, no other middle school in San Diego County has won more Best in Show or First Place ribbons for photography at the San Diego County Fair.

Joe's greatest accomplishment may be that he has done all of this outstanding work despite severe health challenges. In October 2014, Joe left Meadowbrook due to debilitating numbness and pain throughout his entire body. For months, doctors did not know what was wrong. After dozens of tests, in April 2015 he was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disease called Neurosarcoidosis. Through his absence, Joe was able to keep his classes going, through online correspondence and grading. While there is no cure for Neurosarcoidosis, Joe is now able to manage his symptoms and has accomplished his major goal: he returned to work at Meadowbrook in May 2015, back with the students and the learning environment that allow him "to move past my disability."



Megan Gross, has been teaching for eight years, with the last three years spent as the Special Education teacher at Del Norte High School. Megan strives to achieve access to general education curriculum for all of her Special Education students, even those perceived as the most challenged due to their behaviors or limited communication skills. She is a persistent and successful advocate for her students, working tirelessly to build trust with her colleagues. Megan and her team have supported students transitioning from spending an entire day in special education classrooms, to successfully taking general education courses for credit, to earning their high school diploma. Her students have gone on to community college and four-year universities.

When age or grade-appropriate textbooks or materials aren't available for her students, Megan creates her own! She has developed modified books to enable access to material such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Romeo and Juliet*. She has taught her students to embrace technology as a tool, to enhance their communication skills and learning. Megan has also published a training manual to close the gap in special education training among teachers.

Megan is the co-advisor for the Best Buddies club, which promotes friendship and social activities for students with disabilities. It has grown to be the largest club on campus, with over 120 members.

2016 Poway Unified Teachers of the Year

This is a list of all PUSD 2016-2017 school site Teachers of the Year. All of these finalists are outstanding candidates, representative of the high caliber of professionalism and commitment that is characteristic of Poway Unified School District teachers.

Name	Site
Julie Lowrie	Adobe Bluffs
Carole DeBruin	Abraxas
Debby Kubiak	Alternative Programs
Kathi DeBolt	Bernardo Heights
Danielle Brown	Black Mountain
Erin Harms	Chaparral
Christina Gonzalez	Creekside
John Campillo	CTE/DNHS
Kathryn Summers	Deer Canyon
Megan Gross	Del Norte
Sharelle Venable	Del Sur
Kathy Beville	Garden Road
Beth Mori	Highland Ranch
Kara Fradsham	Los Peñasquitos
Joe Gizzo	Meadowbrook
Steve Armacost	Mesa Verde
Dana Becker	Midland
Liz Kane	Monterey Ridge
Carol Buddin	Morning Creek
Gail Miller	Mt. Carmel
Carol Battle	Oak Valley
Laura Griffin	Pomerado
Jacquelyn Whittaker	Poway High
Tom Martin	Rancho Bernardo
Eunice Brothers	Rolling Hills
Christie Setnan	Shoal Creek
Becky Ricci	Stone Ranch
Cathi Bartel	Sundance
Anne Van Bebber	Tierra Bonita
Christina Rodocker	Turtleback
Heather Wallace	Twin Peaks
Nohelani Hsieh	Valley
Dan Lutgen	Westview
Jennifer Langlois	Westwood
Lauren O'Rielly	Willow Grove